

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 MCT-01

ACDA-07 /092 W

-----111033Z 022398 /17

R 110925Z APR 77

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4448

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0293

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJECT: ELF-PLF TEMPORARY COMMITTEE

1. SOURCES WITH DIRECT CONTACTS TO ELF AND PLF STATE THAT A RECENT MEETING APPARENTLY IN KHARTOUM OF REPRESENTATIVES OF SEVERAL ERITREAN INSURGENT GROUPS WAS ABLE TO AGREE TO SELECT A 14-MEMBER AD HOC COMMITTEE (7 ELF AND 7 PLF) TO FUNCTION FOR NEXT SIX MONTHS. PURPOSE OF AD HOC COMMITTEE IS TO COORDINATE INSURGENT POLITICAL AND FIELD OPERATIONS FOR SIX-MONTH PERIOD OF WHAT IS INTENDED TO BE INTENSIVE DRIVE TO ACHIEVE VICTORY. MEMBERS OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ARE REPORTEDLY CHARGED WITH TASK OF VISITING
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ALL INSURGENT-HELD AREAS IN ERITREA TO ENERGIZE REBELS FOR ALL-OUT EFFORT WITHIN NEXT SIX MONTHS.

2. LEADERS OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ARE REPORTED TO BE (A) CHAIRMAN FESSENAIE, (B) VICE CHAIRMAN WOLDEAB WOLDEMARIAM, (C) FOREIGN AFFAIRS OSMAN SALEH SABBE, AND (D) MILITARY COMMANDER COL. ISSIAS AFEWORKE.

3. COMMENT: UNTIL NOW, ASMARA SOURCES HAD REFUSED CONFIRM RADIO OMDURMAN AND OTHER KHARTOUM-BASED CLAIMS OF JOINT MEETINGS OF SEVERAL INSURGENT GROUPS, PRESUMABLY LEADING TO CONSOLIDATION OR AT LEAST JOINT EFFORTS IN FIELD. AT MOST, THESE SOURCES REPORT MEETINGS BEING HELD WITHIN EACH GROUP BUT NOT JOINT MEETINGS. MOREOVER, IT HAS BEEN OBVIOUS THAT THE TWO MAJOR FIELD GROUPS HAVE FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS BEEN COMPETITIVE, EACH STRIVING TO OCCUPY VULNERABLE EPMG OUTPOSTS, VILLAGES, AND SMALL TOWNS IN ITS VICINITY WITH THE OBJECTIVE APPARENTLY OF IMPROVING ITS BARGAINING POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE OTHER. IMPACT ON SECOND DIVISION HAS BEEN MUCH THE SAME AS IF ELF AND PLF WERE IN FACT COORDINATING FIELD OPERATIONS. EXTENSIVE INCREASE IN INSURGENT PRESSURES AT WIDELY DISPARATE SITES OF NACFA, ELABERET, TESSENAY, AFABET, AND BARENTU HAVE STRETCHED EPMG AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT (NEVER VERY GOOD) BEYOND CAPABILITY OF RESPONDING ADEQUATELY TO DEFENSIVE UNIT REQUESTS FOR HELP.

4. AS OF AUTUMN 1976, SECOND DIVISION BEGAN VOLUNTARY EVACUATION OF SOME EXPOSED OUTPOSTS AND ABANDONMENT OF CERTAIN UNSUPPORTABLE TOWNS. (KARORA WAS EXAMPLE OF ABORTIVE EVACUATION; HEAVY WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT WERE AIRLIFTED OUT BUT THEN DEFENSELESS TROOPS WERE FORCED TO WALK ACROSS BORDER INTO SUDAN.) WITHOUT ACCESS TO SECOND DIVISION PLANS, IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO ASCERTAIN WHICH OF LOST TOWNS HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR ABANDONMENT. BUT IN ANY CASE, SECOND DIVISION HAD CERTAINLY NOT PLANNED TO LOSE TROOPS AT THESE POINTS, AND INSURGENTS HAVE TO THAT EXTENT AT LEAST DISRUPTED TIMETABLE BY FORCING WITHDRAWALS UNDER PRESSURE. CONFIDENTIAL

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Message Attributes

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